

pulse green

# Waste not, want not

Living a zero waste lifestyle is not as daunting as it sounds, writes Sulyn Chong

“ARE we going back to the dark ages?” my mum asked, looking slightly aghast when I pass her a colourful little cotton washable sanitary pad, one of the many freebies I received from the recent Zero Waste Malaysia festival held at Slate @ The Row.

The festival, a whole day event, saw the gathering of 15 vendors selling more than 100 zero waste-related products, which included cloth menstrual pads, bamboo straws made by the Orang Asli, beeswax wrap to replace disposable cling wrap and more, in the Zero Waste Market.

“No! It’s supposed to be an alternative to save Mother Earth by creating zero waste,” I reply, barely able to conceal my amusement. “And it’s said to be very comfortable,” I add as my mum stares at me with an incredulous expression, shaking her head.

Well, this is not a surprising reaction and no doubt my mum is not the only one who thinks this way when the words “zero waste” is introduced in any conversation in this country.

“People are daunted by this lifestyle and I understand their concerns,” acknowledges Aurora Tin, the founder of Zero Waste Malaysia whom I meet over lunch recently to talk about the ideas behind this undertaking.

She confides that ever since she started this habit, she has constantly been asked why she bothers?

Why trouble herself with bringing her own containers and bags when she shops? Why waste time washing cotton sanitary pads when there are disposable ones readily available? Most of all, why was she foregoing all of life’s luxuries?

“And I’ll always answer, no, I’m not

missing out on anything. Because once you’ve gotten used to it [the zero waste lifestyle] and are able to live it efficiently, it’s actually very simple. And you’ll find yourself living a much happier life,” she confides.

In addition, Tin adds that living a zero waste life isn’t all that scary. It’s a good way to reduce materialistic headaches while at the same time saving the world we live in. “But most importantly, it isn’t a lifestyle that’s out to deprive you of what you like. It’s a lifestyle where you find alternatives to your current living that’ll help save Mother Nature but still gives you the opportunity to enjoy what you love doing.”

Essentially, zero waste living is a refreshing change that helps to de-clutter what’s not necessary and replaces what’s harmful with choices that would benefit our world and save you money along the way. Ever since adopting this concept, the 29-year-old reveals that she has more time to concentrate on what’s more important — to live a more fulfilling life with her loved ones.

## FREEING FROM TRASH

Zero waste living was first introduced by Bea Johnson back in 2006 in her blog, [zerowastehome.blogspot.com](http://zerowastehome.blogspot.com).

A French native living in America, she

became concerned with the amount of trash produced by her household after shifting from a large bungalow to a small apartment in the city. Her fear of Mother Nature’s demise and what it would mean for her children and the future generations drove her to reinvent her world — one that’s free of waste.

Her success in reducing two years’ worth of household waste that could fit into a small glass jar spurred her to embark on a crusade to rid our world of trash. Not by force but by education. She advocated five simple principles to effectively eliminate waste from anyone’s home: “Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Rot”.

These five Rs are documented extensively in her blog as well as her book, *Zero Waste Home: The Ultimate Guide To Simplify Your Life By Reducing Your Waste*, both of which have become the Holy Grail for anyone wanting to adopt this change in lifestyle.

“Bea’s book is really useful,” shares Tin, who proudly presents me with the paperback. Enthusiastically, she explains that the book has all the necessary information to help anyone interested in living a zero waste lifestyle. “It’s a great guide book. You can follow everything in its entirety or just make small changes.”

*It took me a month to get used to living a zero waste life but once I got the hang of it, life became much more meaningful.*

Aurora Tin



Some of the basic products to get you started on a zero waste lifestyle.



Aurora Tin, founder of Zero Waste Malaysia

